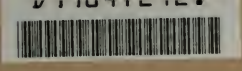


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THE FRENCH SOLDIER.

From a letter of M. De Pressensé of Paris.

At the time when the French soldiers were embarking for the seat of war in the Crimea, a Bible-colporteur sought and obtained permission to converse with the men of one of the regiments that were preparing to depart. While surrounded in the fore-court of the barracks by these warriors, the colporteur, speaking of the value of the holy Scriptures, was addressed by a young soldier of a frank and intelligent countenance. "They have convinced me," said the young man, in a gentle tone, "of the necessity of getting the word of God; but alas," continued he, with a deep sigh, "I have not a centime wherewith to make this precious purchase." "That need not signify," the colporteur quickly replied; "if you have so great a desire to possess a copy, it shall not be said that a Christian allowed you to go away to a foreign shore without giving you one, even should it be at my own expense." Then drawing a New Testament out of his pack, he handed it to the soldier. But what was his surprise and grief when the young man broke into a loud laugh, saying, "You are done, my fine fellow. I am jester number one of the regiment; ask my comrades. It is as clear as the sun that shines, that I have made a fool of you. When I am dead, do you see—" He was proceeding with a flow of profane language, when the colporteur stopped him by saying, "After death the judgment will follow; and what a judgment! Listen how the Lord Jesus Christ speaks: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

For a moment the young soldier ceased to laugh, and appeared as if silenced, but his levity quickly returned. "Give me back the book," said the colporteur. "Nay, my old fellow," replied the mocker, "I should be ashamed so to affront you before such a respectable company as this is. What would my comrades

think of you, were they to see you taking back with your left hand the present which your right hand had just offered? Your book will be of use to me. It will do to light my pipe." Then making the military salute in a grotesque manner, he walked away. "Lord, forgive him," cried the colporteur; "he knows not what he does."

Fifteen months passed away, when the colporteur came to a village three hundred miles away from the spot where the young soldier had taken the New Testament from him. He entered the kitchen of an inn, where he found the people of the house seated in deep grief. He made inquiry as to the cause of their sorrow, when the landlady, with many tears, said, "Only a few hours ago, and my son, the joy of my life, was placed in the silent grave; and what a son!"

The colporteur listened to the sad story of her soldier son; of his departure to the wars, and his return to die in his mother's arms. He felt a tender interest in the recital; and to abate her grief he said, "Let me read to you a few lines out of a good book; they are suited to the hour of sorrow." He then turned to several passages which spoke of God chastening us for our profit, when the woman uttered a loud cry and started up; but the colporteur proceeded to read a text which set forth Christ as the great High-priest at the right hand of God, and through whom sinners might come boldly to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find grace in time of need.

On hearing these words the woman caught the book out of his hand. "You wicked man," she cried, "you have taken from me the most precious thing I have still remaining of him." Then dropping the book as she glanced at it, she added, "No, this is not my precious volume: mine is torn, but this is perfect."

The woman quickly left the room, and returned bringing with her a New Testament of the same size as that she had cast on the floor. The colporteur opened it, when to his astonishment he saw written in French, on the inside, these words: "*Received at—, the—day of—. Despised at first, and badly used; but afterwards read, believed, and made the instrument of my salvation. I. L., of the fourth company of the—regiment of the line.*"

In an instant light broke upon the mind of the colporteur: Was it indeed the very Testament that had been taken by the

young mocker? Yes, it was the same. On closer inspection several leaves were missing, and it was concluded that they had been taken to light the soldier's pipe. But this destroying of the book had been wonderfully stopped. The colporteur made further inquiries, and learned from the bereaved mother the most pleasing intelligence. Her son had told her, that the evening before a battle serious thoughts of the words of the man whom he had mocked and defrauded of the book came suddenly on his mind. He remembered his warnings, and was troubled. To pacify his mind he took from his knapsack the sacred volume which had become his accuser. As he turned over the leaves, what was his astonishment when, instead of threatenings, his eyes fell on such precious truths as these: "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." John 3: 17. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11.: 28.

As he pondered this last passage, the sound of the drum called him to fall into the ranks. In a short time he was engaged hand to hand in the battle. It was a deadly struggle, and many were the dying and the dead that lay stretched on the ground. At its close our young soldier was among the wounded on the field. He was afterwards found by his comrades and carried to the hospital in the rear. A severe wound now placed him for several weeks on the borders of the grave. It was a time for serious thought and prayer. His New Testament was not forgotten; it was his best companion, and it brought conviction and light and comfort to his mind.

After having lain for some weeks in a hospital in a foreign land, he came home to his parents' house to die. During the time that he spent under their roof, he grew in grace and the knowledge of Christ. The torn Testament was almost constantly in his hands. Through the teachings of the Holy Spirit, he saw increasingly his need of a Saviour. Christ was all his salvation, and all his desire. Feeling the power of the truth himself, he entreated all who visited him to be reconciled to God through faith in the divine Redeemer; and then calmly died in the hope of everlasting life.

In this brief account we see *the power of divine truth*. Many a man, who in the apparent security of life has rejected the Bible and jested with sacred things, has turned pale in the

hour of danger, and gladly turned to the holy book for light and mercy. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Jer. 23. 29. Blessed are those who are led, by any means, to receive the truth of God in humility.

See *the riches of divine grace*. The apostle Paul, who was once "a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious," obtained mercy; and not he alone: many are the instances of the triumphs of redeeming love in the hearts of men. The young French soldier is before us as an illustrious case. But let not sinners abuse such facts. The power of Christ can subdue the infidelity of the hardest heart, and his precious blood can cleanse from all sin. Yet let them take heed, lest they be left to go on after the ways of their own hearts, and at length it be said of them, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." Acts 13: 41.

THE LOST FOUND.

- 1 Oh, how divine, how sweet the joy,
When but one sinner turns,
And, with a humble, broken heart,
His sins and errors mourns!
- 2 Pleas'd with the news, the saints below
In songs their tongues employ;
Beyond the skies the tidings go,
And heav'n is fill'd with joy.
- 3 Well pleas'd the father sees and hears
The conscious sinner's moan
Jesus receives him in his arms,
And claims him for his own.
- 4 Nor angels can their joys contain,
But kindle with new fire:
"The sinner lost, is found," they sing,
And strike the sounding lyre.

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